



**US Army Corps
of Engineers**
Jacksonville District

News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Corps Increases Lake Okeechobee Releases Today

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. - Water managers for the Army Corps of Engineers and the South Florida Water Management District increased water releases today (August 29, 2003) from Lake Okeechobee within the regulations of the current Water Supply and Environmental Regulation Schedule.

The water releases include a continuous release not to exceed 3,500 cubic feet per second at St. Lucie Lock and Dam (S-80) on the St. Lucie Canal and up to 6,500 cubic feet per second at Moore Haven Lock and Dam (S-77) on the Caloosahatchee River.

"This is only the third August since 1913 that the floodplains of the Kissimmee River Basin and Fisheating Creek (the primary streams flowing into the lake) have contributed to these high inflows," said Susan Sylvester a hydrologic engineer with the Corps' Jacksonville District. "The groundwater system wide is saturated due to the wetter than normal wet season rainfall this June through August".

Sylvester also explained that historically, September is one of the highest rainfall months of the year in Florida and the increase in discharge from the lake is necessary to stay ahead of the potential for additional rainfall and prevent future problems.

For more information about Jacksonville District's activities, visit our website at: <http://www.saj.usace.army.mil>

The Herbert Hoover Dike, a 140-mile long flood control embankment, surrounds the Lake. The Corps' South Florida Operations Office regularly maintains and inspects the dike. The frequency of inspections increases as lake water levels rise. Data collected during these inspections are evaluated against past performance of the dike and monitoring is adjusted as needed.

The current lake elevation is at 16.46 feet. A week ago the level was 16.08. Today's level is about a foot above normal for this time of year based on information from the last decade.

Water level data for Lake Okeechobee and the Central and Southern Florida Project can be found on the Jacksonville District's Water Management and Meteorology Section Homepage at <http://www.saj.usace.army.mil/h2o/>.